AHMET T. KARAMUSTAFA: *Sufism: The Formative Period*. The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007; pp. 202.

This book is a compact, authoritative survey of the development of Sufism in Islamic countries from the ninth to twelfth centuries CE. For readers outside Islam attracted by Sufism's passionate poetry, stories and spirituality, the author's historicist approach, which positions the movement in social and cultural contexts that include theology and jurisprudence, will prove as sobering as it is educational. For scholars, and for devotees within Islam, the book will be of lasting value as a reference work. For all its readers, it will reaffirm the abundance, depth and intellectual sophistication of early Sufi traditions.

Sufism: The Formative Period controls an encyclopaedic accumulation of facts through a clear organisation into six chapters. Chapter 1 traces a turning of attention to the inner life among renunciants in Basra and Medina. In the second half of the ninth century their practice coalesced in Baghdad into the distinctive movement which took its name from *suf*, the Arabic word for wool, referring to adherents' preference for woollen garments. Summaries of the lives and teachings of the prominent Baghdad Sufis, Kharrāz, al-Nūrī, and Junayd, are then used to explicate the leading characteristics of foundation Sufism. Above all, Sufis aspired to experiential knowledge of God through cultivation of the heart. Among themselves they fostered camaraderie and a sense of election. Although belonging to an intellectual elite, they paradoxically doubted the efficacy of human reason for attaining knowledge of God. They adopted obedience to God's law, *shari'a*, as the basis for their quest, but avoided scholarly debate as a distraction from cultivating the heart. An urban phenomenon, early Sufism tolerated family life and participation in paid work, and was centrist in relation to Baghdad politics and society.

The single event tending to contradict this conclusion, namely the execution of Manṣūr al-Hallāj in 922 CE by Baghdad authorities who misunderstood his proclamation, 'I am the Truth' as a claim of incarnationism, the author dismisses as 'legendary,' 'inaccurate' and 'anachronistic' (26). The rejection of Hallāj's story, which circulated among later Sufis and inspired spiritual aspirants of other traditions, typifies the study's rational, research-based approach.

Evidence derived from Sufi biographies and teaching texts supports important overviews in the remaining chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 trace complex divergences and overlaps between what were basically Baghdad

Sufi practices and other modes of pious living, in south-western Iran and lower Iraq (Sahl al-Tustarī); in Khurāsān and Transoxania (Tirmidhī, the Malāmatiiyya or 'Path of Blame', and later Sulamī, Khārgūshī, Sarrāj and Kalābādhī); in western Iran and Arabia (Ibn-Khafīf al-Shīrāzī); and in al-Andalus (al-Ǧalamankī). Chapter 4, 'Specialised Sufi Literature,' provides a bibliography of surviving and lost Sufi manuals, compilations, and biographies. Analysis distinguishes the 'traditionalists' Makkī, Abū Nu'aym, Abū Manṣūr and Anṣarī, who were confident that Sufism was 'an integral part, even the very core,' of 'true' Islam (97), from writers like Sarrāj and Kalābādhī who adopted a more distanced approach in introducing Sufism to new audiences. Later, canonical works in Arabic and Persian by Qushayrī in Nishapur and by Hujwīrī in Ghazna and Lahore spelled out Sufism's theological and legal base. Qushayrī nevertheless conceded the inferiority of knowledge derived from authority or reason, which was 'still seeking proof,' to knowledge gifted by God to 'the people of attainment' (98-99), and Hujwīrī warned of the dangers of formalism. Finally, in the eleventh century CE Ghazāli's 'best-seller,' *Bringing the Religious Sciences to Life*, cemented a pivotal place for Sufism in Islamic knowledge systems. Chapters 5 and 6 trace the formation and spread of Sufi communities, often housed in lodges around training masters. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries these and other features of Sufi piety became imbricated with popular cults of saints, thereby raising the movement's profile and leading to connections with politics. At this stage Sufism's fundamental orientation to the inner life produced a self-reflexive criticism of its accommodation to social norms that began to manifest in 'libertine and iconoclastic social behaviour' (177).

As a compendium and analysis of research findings, *Sufism: The Formative Period* deserves high40045450319 praise, but it does not encourage faint-hearted or desultory perusal. Maps showing towns and cities and the medieval boundaries of regions like Khurāsān, Transoxania, and al-Andalus would have helped non-expert readers to grasp Sufism's geographical spread and the journeys of individuals. Terms like *awliyā'*, *baraka*, *dhikr*, *fiqh*, *firasa*, *hulūl*', *ishq*, *kalām*, *karāma*, *malāma*, *ma'rifa*, *nafs*, *qalb*, *ribāṭ*, *samā*, *tawba*, *tawhīd*, and *walī* are defined at first use, but their recurrences force readers to backtrack the definitions through page numbers in the index. Those who persist will build their knowledge of Sufi concepts, but inclusion of a glossary would have averted some frustration. The symbolic linking of East and West, seen in the presentation of dates in their Islamic lunar or solar forms, followed by their common-era equivalents, is a politically tactful but distracting practice. Finally, non-expert readers might have benefited from an

introductory orientation to Sufism's place in the region's history, though any deficiency here is compensated for by the volume's excellent concluding summary. In general this book's concentration on its topic, successfully combining succinctness with comprehensiveness, justifies the respect traditionally accorded to distinguished works of scholarship.

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